

Hanover County has been a leader in this area and will continue to develop such collections.

Workplace Challenges

Library staff will continue to assist users in research and in reader advisory. Their skills will help people make better sense out of the amazing complexity and variety of information resources now available.



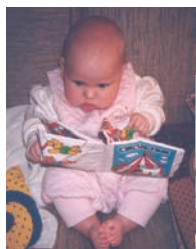
Patrons help themselves at Northeast Library's self check out station

Library staff will need to be well-educated, technologically adept, and culturally aware if they are to continue to provide excellence in customer service. At the same time, new skills in marketing, assessment, and training will need to be developed.

Self-service applications will allow library staff to spend less time on support activities and more time in providing customer assistance.

Children Still Come First

One area in which public libraries will find increasing recognition is in their work with young children. It is increasingly recognized that the most significant development in mental ability occurs early in life.



Children like these are the library's future

The exposure to vocabulary and reading that occurs in children's programs is critical in the development of a child's literacy skills. Programs such as our "Growing Readers" will be expanded and become mandatory throughout North Carolina.



Building for the Future

While the remote user will become as prevalent as the person walking into a library, this will not obviate the need for well-designed libraries.



Myrtle Grove Branch Library in 2000

Communities have always been defined in large measure by the public institutions they create. A community with an excellent public library makes a strong statement on how it values

learning and intellectual pursuits.

Libraries will remain centers for self-education, but they also will serve an even more fundamental role as a gathering place for community. Our library system has



Events such as the Cape Fear Crime Festival grow in popularity

I know from experience that one of the first things that newcomers to Wilmington do is to get their public library card—almost as if that act validates them as members of the community. At any rate this speaks volumes about the centrality of the public library in people's minds.

Library Supporters Lead the Way

As we conclude our centennial year, I would be remiss if I did not remark upon the many people who have both used their public library and supported their public library in so many ways.

In reviewing the past one hundred years, one is struck by how often it is the general public which has taken the lead in the development of library services. From the Sorosis Club, which in 1906 advocated the creation of the Wilmington Public Library, to the Friends of the Library in 1976 who organized to support the creation of the



Sorosis Club members in 1955



Fundraising for the Northeast Regional Branch Library

New Hanover County Public Library, and more recently, to the Northeast Library Action Committee, which led the charge for improved branch services, it was our users and potential users who spearheaded the effort for improved public library service.

Perhaps their dynamism was based upon a passion for reading and learning that they could only envision fully realized in a library. As long as this is the case, the next one hundred years of library service in New Hanover County will be as fruitful as the last one hundred.

—David M. Paynter, Library Director